Associated Press

Sen. Charles Mathias prior to television appearance.

Mathias: Disclose All Data

Senator Sees Possible Need To Impeach

By Charles A. Krause
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Republican Sen. Charles McC. Mathias said yesterday that Congress will have "very little alternative" to the prompt impeachment and trial of President Nixon if the President does not fully disclose all tapes, logs and other documents related to the Watergate affair.

"There is a general outcry for complete disclosure," Mathias said. "We must get it all (out) in the open so we'll know where we are" in terms of the President's personal involvement in the series of scandals that have plagued his administration, Mathias said.

Appearing on the CBS News program "Face the Nation" (WTOP-TV), Maryland's senior U.S. senator noted that the Ervin Committee, the Watergate special prosecutor's office and the courts have all at one time or another reached "a final roadblock" in attempting to unravel the complexities of the various scandals.

"The only place where there will be no obstacles is an impeachment proceeding," Mathias said. "There is no privilege in an impeachment proceeding because this is, of course, the ultimate inquiry of the nation."

Mathias said Mr. Nixon promised full disclosure of all Watergate related information two weeks ago at the series of meetings the President held at the White House with members of Congress, including including Mathias.

But, Mathias said, Congress must act if the President doesn't, to "clear the air" surrounding the Watergate break-in, campaign financing improprieties, the creation of the so-called plumbers unit and the firing of Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox.

Mathias appeared to be particularly concerned about the plumbers unit, which was responsible for breaking into Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office and possibly for other covert activities undertaken on White House orders.

Calling the plumbers unit "a clandestine police force" yesterday, Mathias said he asked

See MATHIAS, C3, Col. 1

NOVEMBER 26, 1973

MATHIAS, From C1

the President for a full explanation of the need for the unit's existence on Nov. 14 at the White House meeting Mathias attended. Mathias said Mr. Nixon promised to send the Senator a written statement concerning the plumbers but has thus far failed to do so.

Mathias hedged when asked whether he believes the President's explanations concerning the two missing Watergate tapes and an 18-minute gap in a third tape, all subpoened by the special Watergate prosecutor.

"It's possible that these are the normal technical problems that occur," Mathias said. "But the problem is that nobody will ever know. I think each one of these disclosures (of missing or inaudible tapes) nibbles away at (the President's) credibility. It's the greatest reason I can think of for a massive, complete and immediate disclosure" of all Watergate information, Mathias said.

Mathias indicated that he thought the country has not yet seen the end of damaging revelations related to White House activity since Mr. Nixon assumed office in 1969. Because of this, Mathias said, he expects Watergate "will be the (election) issue in 1974."

"We (Congress) won't be able to wait "until after the 1974 elections to decide whether or not to impeach and try the President, Mathias said. "An overwhelming issue could develop" concerning Mr. Nixon's fitness for office that would force Congress to act before next November's elections, Mathias said.

The Republican senator said he "expects" to run for reelection to the senate next year. At the same time he acknowledged that the Republican Party has been "very seriously hurt" by the Watergate affair.

Mathias, who has been an outspoken critic of the Nixon administration and has voted against its proposals on several key issues, may not be seriously affected by the President's unpopularity and the general misfortunes of the Republican Party.

Mathias appears to have his party's Senate nomination sewn up at this time and there appear to be few Democrats interested in challenging him.